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USING CHILDREN'S LITERATURE TO INCREASE
UNDERSTANDING OF MINORITY GROUPS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

It is imperative in a world today made smaller by transportation and communication improvements, that children be taught an understanding of all peoples. With an increasing population and a lessening of space, understanding and cooperation are essential.

The art of reading can be a tool to help children gain in this understanding. Children should start working toward this goal early in their school years.

The child must be taught to read so that he can live intelligently and with pleasure in our complex civilization, and so that he can learn whatever the school tries to teach through the medium of reading. He needs to use reading as a means of extending his experiences, of following his interests, of keeping abreast of the times, of getting information on his questions, and of obtaining fun and recreation.¹

A great deal of writing has been done in the field of children's literature on minority groups. Children need to be made aware of these books that are available to them, for through their reading many children can grow in appreciation and understanding of people who, for reasons of race, religion, or culture are different from them, but who in many ways are very much like them.

Often things not fully understood lead to the formula-

¹Paul McKee, The Teaching of Reading (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1948), p. VII.

tion of negative opinions. Books dealing with minority groups could in many ways assist in clarifying misunderstandings of these groups.

Realizing these facts, this study was made.

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. Books of minority groups are not chosen by the children of the Adel Elementary School, and it was the purpose of this study to look for causes and ways of motivating further exploration of this material.

Need for the study. Many well-written books concerning minority groups had been neglected on the library shelves. As a child begins his own selection of reading material, he needs to be guided to widen his scope of selection. With a lack of need to read this material it was apparent there was a need for finding out why this happened and what could be done to change the situation.

Understanding people the world over is vital to our survival in this world today. McGeorge Bundy pointed this out in his statement:

Foreign affairs are the last and greatest task of modern American thought--the last, in that the others have had a deeper and more natural connection with our own history in the latter part of the nineteenth century, and the greatest, in that it is now reasonably plain that we shall not survive in our "new world" if we do not survive in the world as a whole.¹

¹McGeorge Bundy, "From Innocence to Engagement," Paths of American Thought, Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. and Morton White, Editors (No. 16. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1963), p. 293.

Perhaps the reading of books on minority groups can give children an insight into these different peoples, making it possible to live in the world as a whole.

Limitations. Inherent in this research were several limitations that had to be considered in evaluating the data:

1. The personal judgment of the researcher was used in making recommendations and drawing conclusions.
2. The selection of the twenty-four books used in this study was made at the suggestion of the school librarian and the choice of the researcher. The choice of other books could have produced other data.
3. The study was limited to one grade level and other levels might have revealed other data.

II. DEFINITION OF TERMS

For the purposes of this study the following definitions are used to clarify understanding:

1. Minority group. A minority group is any religious, racial or cultural group living in a land that is controlled by a larger religious, racial or cultural group.
2. Minority group books for children. Books from children's literature concerning or giving details of minority groups were called minority group books for children.

III. PROCEDURE

The procedure followed was to first select a grade level for which books of this study might be of greatest value. The school used for the study contained grades from kindergarten through fourth grade. Fourth grade was chosen because:

1. Cultures and countries of the world were being studied in the fourth grade Social Studies class which should have led them through curiosity and interest to books concerning minority groups.
2. Because of age, this grade might be better able to remember past travel experiences and additional experiences with other people.

Each fourth grader was interviewed and asked to select books he preferred to read from a group of twenty-four books-- twelve concerning minority groups which had rarely been checked out of the library and twelve currently very popular books from the school library. The currently popular books were chosen by frequency of check out for recreational reading purposes.

Each child was then asked personal questions as to other places he had lived or visited, his church attendance, his family's size and occupations, and any remembered experiences with minority groups.

The motivating procedures used were attractive bulletin board displays, placement of many minority group books so that

the children would see them more readily, verbal suggestions of reading some of these minority group books by teachers and the librarian, a conscious effort to promote cultural study in Social Studies classes and a book read to one class by the teacher concerning a little known minority group.

A thirteen point questionnaire concerning knowledge of minority groups was given the children at the beginning of the study and again at the end to determine whether any growth had taken place as a result of the motivation procedures.

An analysis of the data and conclusions followed.

CHAPTER II

SURVEY OF LITERATURE

Literature related to the study. The literature reviewed for this study was concerned primarily with the relationship of reading in assisting understanding of minority groups.

Brooks pointed out that reading is the key to information contained in books.¹

Tinker and McCullough stated that, as a medium of communication and a means of learning, reading is indispensable.² From these facts it can be seen what a powerful influence reading can have on all peoples lives. Without reading people's knowledge and understanding are limited.

In regard to the importance of reading in the daily lives of people Brooks stated:

Reading is the most important subject in the entire school curriculum. Everyone needs to read with some facility. Reading is used more now than formerly. A greater amount and a wider range of information are needed to meet adequately the increasingly complex conditions of life. The news of the day, important discoveries and inventions, civic and political questions, current commercial and business information, advertisements, notices, signs, bulletins of various kinds, the tickets used for amusement and travel all require reading.³

¹Fowler D. Brooks, The Applied Psychology of Reading (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1926), p. 1.

²Miles A. Tinker and Constance M. McCullough, Teaching Elementary Reading (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1962), p. 3.

³Brooks, loc. cit.

In order to live in a world of fast change and often misunderstood actions of other groups, people often depend on gaining understanding from the printed page. Broom said:

The ability to read is recognized generally as one of the most important skills that a person can have. Reading is a tool of the acquisitive mind; it is the vehicle for obtaining ideas that cannot be transmitted verbally. The individual who reads well has at his command a means for widening his mental horizons and for multiplying his opportunities for experience. Reading is a crucial factor affecting intellectual and emotional growth.¹

The classroom teacher can guide the child to seek out many of the necessary understandings of minority groups. The teacher can do a great deal to make reading a stimulating activity when the child reaches out to read material other than just about his own immediate surroundings.

One should always remember, however, that many selections of high merit which pupils may at first have no liking for can be made attractive to them by the skillful teacher. Such a teacher is sensitive to merit in reading material for children; she is able to distinguish between cheap writing and literature. She realizes that, although children know what they like and what they dislike in books and poems, they do not know at all what selections they can learn to like. She knows that no book is good for a pupil if he does not like it, but she believes also that, with a little guidance, any pupil can learn to like many selections which he could never enjoy if left entirely to himself.²

It is stated by Postel in the book Teaching the Elementary School Child that children are stimulated to read more when they know of the many exciting avenues into which

¹M. E. Broom and others, Effective Reading Instruction (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1951), p. 1.

²McKee, op. cit., p. 568

books may lead them.¹

Being able to stimulate the child into avenues of reading then seems to be a key here toward using the vastness of children's literature. The teacher who is able to accomplish this goal is benefiting the child and ultimately aiding all mankind.

In helping children learn, the teacher should be careful to give the best in guidance and motivation, so that the child can keep up with modern day trends and problems. Gans pointed this out:

It is clearly of first importance that today's child be guided in his day-to-day school life and home life so that he is eager to keep up to date with important affairs, on his level of understanding. "Read to me about the astronaut," asked a six-year-old after he heard a television newscast reporting the launching of the first American in space. Creating in young children a desire and an eagerness to know is not difficult. World happenings fascinate them. They seem unafraid of new events, ideas, and objects. They also seem ready to develop lines of interest, following certain topics or questions day by day. They seem right for the kind of readers it would be fortunate to have them become.²

Therefore, motivating the child to read material concerning minority groups would help him know about and understand their problems of living in the world today.

The quality of the literature a child reads should also be considered. The child made eager to read should have material available to him of the very highest quality. As Artley

¹Lillian M. Logan and Virgil G. Logan, Teaching the Elementary School Child (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1961), p. 290.

²Roma Gans, Common Sense in Teaching Reading (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1963), p. 14.

stated:

First of all, a good story or a good book, either for children or adults, must hold interest and attention. If a book is dully written, no matter how sincere, informative, or well-meaning it may be, it will not find readers.¹ Any child will be quick to say when a book bores him.

Artley further said:

A second criterion for a good book, and a significant one indeed, is honesty of ideas. This means general sincerity of tone, accuracy of facts, consistency of development.²

A final criterion stated by Artley is:

A good book also should have good structure and development; that is, the threads of the story should be so woven as to present a tidy and satisfactory whole. Every detail should be an integral part of the story.³

In having quality literature available for children, much of the responsibility rests with the librarian. It is up to the librarian to see that quality literature fills the library's shelves and then it is her role to help the children expand their reading horizons and utilize this material. The librarian must also see that children in the library are exposed to a variety of good reading material.

In connection with this growing pattern of interests that arises to meet those basic needs that reading satisfies, parents, teachers, and librarians have two important responsibilities. First, they must see to it that children find books readily accessible at school and at home and that they themselves are always near to help and guide children as they turn to books. They must see to it that the child's interests are met and challenged.

¹A. Sterl Artley, Your Child Learns to Read (Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1953), p. 204.

²Ibid., p. 204.

³Ibid., p. 206.

Secondly, adults must see that the books with which they keep their children supplied are good.¹

As to the purposes for using and teaching good literature McKee said:

As the late Dr. Leonard has proposed, it is rather to provide the child with extended and enriched experiences. Here the chief objective is to give the child through literature a wide variety of interesting and important experiences, interpretations of the ways of life, insights concerning human characteristics and relationships, and the like.²

The term "minority group" has been defined for the purposes of this study but a look at other interpretations of the term could aid understanding. In looking at the history of the term Rose stated:

The term "minority group" grew up in Europe to describe the particular social position of some people in relation to the rest of the population. In European countries with a long history, people with a certain cultural background frequently had an ancient attachment to a given piece of land. They were known as a nationality group, and the land they occupied bore their name.³

Bringing the history of the term to the United States, Rose further said:

There are no "national minorities"--in the European sense of the term in the United States. Rather, the term "minority groups" has come to be applied to those groups in the United States who face certain handicaps, who are subject to certain discriminations, and who are the objects of prejudice from most other people. There is no one "majority group" with a distinctive history and a special claim to the land.⁴

¹Artley, op. cit., p. 199.

²Paul McKee, Reading and Literature (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1934), p. 475.

³Arnold M. Rose, Race Prejudice and Discrimination (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1951), p. 3.

⁴Ibid., p. 4.

Minority groups in the United States today can be objectively distinguished by one or another of four different characteristics. These are race, nationality, language, and religion.¹ In the locale then of this study examples of this would be Negroes, Orientals, Jews, and Quakers. None of these is present in the all-white community used in this study, with the only religions, Protestant and Catholic.

Young had difficulty defining a minority group exactly. For use in his book he offered this explanation:

There is, unfortunately, no word in the English language which can with philological propriety be applied to all these groups, that is, which includes groups which are distinguished by biological features, alien national cultural traits, or a combination of both. For this reason, the phrases, "minorities of racial or national origin," "American minorities," or "minority peoples" are here used as synonyms for the popular usage of the word race.²

To summarize the term "minority group" as to its meaning when used in the United States Rose said:

Being a member of a minority group in the United States, then, is a function of the state of mind of the general population and of the person himself, rather than a function of his ancestry.³

The problem then is how to assist the majority groups in the United States in order that they can understand and accept the minority groups contained within its borders. The measure of American leadership in international relations

¹Ibid., p. 5

²Donald Young, American Minority Peoples (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1932), p. xiii.

³Rose, op. cit., p. 5.

depends to a significant degree on dominant attitudes and practices toward minority groups at home.¹ We cannot expect to be a world leader when within our own country there is much unrest. We must begin early in the schools to educate children to appreciate, understand and accept all groups of people.

To gain this understanding is difficult as Wagner pointed out:

For brotherly love is easy to understand when you apply it to your own family. Robert Louis Stevenson once said if all the people of the world ate at the same table no one would go hungry. He meant that it's the most natural thing in the world to share with those who are near and dear to you. But it isn't so easy to understand brotherly love when you apply it to our world family of nations. How can we act as brothers to complete strangers?²

We need to strive for a higher goal in unity and brotherly love. All people need to continually reach for this higher goal and by teaching children in school to do this the school is taking a step in the right direction.

This survey has shown the importance of reading about minority groups. It has shown how reading habits and interests can be developed in relation to minority groups. This can best be summarized in a statement by Tinker and McCullough who said that reading should contribute to the development of desirable personal and social understandings, attitudes, and

¹Rose, op. cit., p. 11.

²Ruth H. Wagner, Put Democracy to Work (New York: Abelard-Schuman, 1961), pp. 77-78.

patterns of behavior.¹

¹Tinker and McCullough, op. cit., p. 9.

CHAPTER III

ANALYSIS OF DATA

I. THE COMMUNITY

This study was done in Adel, Iowa, a county seat town of 2,300 people located fifteen miles west of Des Moines, Iowa. It is an all white community. There are seven churches with the Protestant and Catholic religions represented. The town supports half of its population and the other half commute to jobs elsewhere, the biggest group commuting to Des Moines.

The industries of the town include Adel Brick and Tile Company, Straight Engineering and Monarch Manufacturing, which is located three miles east of Adel.

There are doctors, dentists, lawyers and a veterinarian located in the town along with a mental health center. Professional needs are well taken care of by these people.

The town supports a library and two parks. The library had a large addition built on to it two years ago and one of the parks is under development now.

There are several new housing developments and many fine older homes. The town is well kept and attractive.

II. THE SCHOOL

The school used in this study is the Adel Elementary School, a new building built in 1964. It houses kindergarten through fourth grade students in classes of approximately

twenty-five each.

The school is staffed with a full-time principal, thirteen teachers, a secretary, two teacher aids and several part-time workers in special areas.

There is a central library in the building with a one-half day accredited librarian in charge. There is free use of this library by both students and faculty.

III. THE TEACHERS

Interviews were conducted with the third and fourth grade teachers to ascertain approaches to minority group study. The teaching in the classroom could be relevant to the study, in that classroom learning about minority groups could promote interest and understandings in this area.

The fourth grade teachers were interviewed as to current curricula and the third grade teachers as to both current and preceding curricula, when subject fourth graders were in the third grade.

The two questions asked each teacher were:

1. What classroom work relates to minority groups?
2. How are minority group books promoted in your classroom?

The first fourth grade teacher interviewed was the fourth grade social studies teacher in a partially departmentalized fourth grade system. She said that very little has been done with the teaching of cultural and real living aspects in fourth grade social studies. This has been left

for the sixth grade teacher to accomplish. It has been felt that the fourth grade level has enough to accomplish with the study of geography and economics in various parts of the world.

The other fourth grade teacher interviewed was the fourth grade mathematics teacher. She stated that the only emphasis placed on a minority group was through books read by the teacher to her homeroom group. The book Blue Willow by Lois Lenski was one usually read to the class. It is a story dealing with migrant workers and the children respond favorably to it. Other books concerning the regions studied in social studies were used for group reading.

At the self contained third grade level, the first teacher interviewed said that the main teaching of minorities at this level has been incidental learning. She said that to last year's class, during the Christmas season, she read from a magazine a Jewish story about Hanukkah and the lighting of the eight candles. The class then constructed a large construction paper minora for the bulletin board. She said the children seemed fascinated with this story and project.

The class had been reading books listed on the leaflet sent out by the Iowa Department of Classroom Teachers South Central District. Of the books utilized in the investigator's study, the one most read in the self contained third grade was The Mouse and the Motorcycle. All books read by the group were reviewed by book reports, done by posters made of con-

struction paper and crayons.

The second third grade teacher interviewed also stated that any minority group study was done basically through incidental learning. The class read together the book Two For The Game, the story of a Negro boy and a white boy. This reading involved a discussion of Negroes' athletic and musical ability. During map study a discussion of ancestors was brought up and the children noted the blends of the world that made up their own classroom. They also noted that certain countries seem to have a dominant religious group, as that most of Italy is Catholic and that the Catholic Pope lives in Italy.

The News Trails magazine has usually carried an article on Hanukkah near the Christmas season, and this article was read and discussed, although the teacher felt that understanding has not been really gained here, as the Jewish faith seemed too far removed from any of their lives.

The last third grade teacher interviewed said, too, that minority group discussion has been done usually only when classroom situations arise. The book Ginger Box by Martha S. Foster was read in this classroom each year, however. It is a Quaker story that points out many aspects of the Quaker way of life. The teacher says the children especially enjoy this book and seem to gain understandings of this religious group from the reading and discussion of the book.

The third grade reading series published by Houghton-

Mifflin Company contains illustrations with Negro children in them. An interesting point to note about this is that all the teachers said that not one child has ever commented on the fact that some of the children in the book are Negro.

IV. THE SOCIAL STUDIES TEXTBOOK

The fourth grade social studies program has been devoted to studies of several areas of the world. The text used has been Follett's Exploring Regions Near and Far. A look at this text was necessary because of the understanding of people that can be developed from its use.

The teacher's guide for the text states that the prime purposes of the textbook are: 1) to help the child understand his world 2) to help him develop skills in using the tools needed to study his world (maps, graphs, pictures, and books) 3) to help him develop attitudes that will lead him to responsible citizenship.¹

The third listed purpose is especially important to this study, as the attitudes of a responsible citizen would include within them attitudes toward minority groups. The book emphasizes geographical, historical and social concepts which should relate to people in different areas of the world. Social concepts of good citizenship, interdependence and cooperation should build backgrounds for further study of groups of people

¹Herbert H. Gross and others, Exploring Regions Near and Far (Chicago: Follett Publishing Company, 1965), p. TG-3.

and more specifically for this study, minority groups.

Countries specifically covered include Brazil, Libya, Australia, Norway, India, Japan and areas of the United States.

From such a complete text should stem much knowledge of different peoples and a motivation to explore further through the use of other books.

V. THE CHILDREN

Fifty-eight fourth grade pupils from the Adel Community School were used for this study. Their ages ranged from nine years and five months to ten years and eleven months. Three of the children had no brothers and sisters and the rest came from families with from one other child up to nine other children in the family.

Of their parents' occupations, fifteen fathers were involved in work in factories, eleven were in sales, eight were highly skilled workers or laborers, seven were truck drivers, six were farmers, four were in construction work, one was a minister, one was a teacher and one was a draftsman. Four fathers were either not living or not living in the home. Thirteen mothers were found to be working outside the home either full-time or part-time.

Eight of the children said they did not belong to any religious group. Five of the children stated a preferred church but said they rarely if ever attended. The remaining forty-five said they usually attended church and church activi-

ties. Four of the forty-five attended the Catholic church and the rest of the children listed various Protestant faiths.

Only two of the children could recall having lived in any other state--a girl who recently came from Omaha, Nebraska, and a boy recently coming to Adel from Herron, South Dakota. The rest of the children had lived in Iowa for as long as they could remember, and most of those had lived in Adel or the surrounding countryside all of their lives.

Twenty-three of the children could not remember having traveled out of the state of Iowa. The remainder of the children had visited other states, with the states surrounding Iowa the most frequently mentioned. None of the children had ever traveled out of the United States.

The favorite type of book or story each child preferred to read was about animals. Mysteries and adventures ranked next in popularity. Seventeen of the fifty-eight said they did not enjoy reading, but the remainder thought choosing and reading books was fun to do.

None of the children interviewed remembered any personal experiences with minority groups. Several mentioned seeing Negroes on television programs but this was the only minority group even mentioned by them.

VI. THE BOOKS

The following is a listing of the twenty-four books used in this study. Following the listing are annotations concern-

ing the books.

BOOKS FREQUENTLY CHECKED OUT OF THE SCHOOL LIBRARY:

Atwater, Richard and Florence. Mr. Poppers Penguins, Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1938.

Bell, Norman. The Weightless Mother, Chicago: Follett Publishing Company, 1967.

Cameron, Eleanor. The Wonderful Flight to the Mushroom Planet, Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1954.

Cleary, Beverly. The Mouse and the Motorcycle, New York: William Morrow and Company, 1965.

Farley, Walter. The Horse That Swam Away, New York: Random House, 1965.

Haywood, Carolyn. Back To School With Betsy, New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1943.

Henry, Marguerite. Stormy, Chicago: Rand McNally and Company, 1963.

Lindman, Maj. Snipp, Snapp, Snurr and The Red Shoes, Chicago: Albert Whitman and Company, 1936.

Lofting, Hugh. The Voyages of Doctor Dolittle, Philadelphia: J. B. Lippencott Company, 1922.

Norton, Mary. Bed-knob and Broomstick, New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1943.

Sewell, Anna, Black Beauty, Ohio: The World Publishing Company, 1946.

White, E. B. Charlotte's Web, New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1952.

BOOKS NOT FREQUENTLY CHECKED OUT OF THE SCHOOL LIBRARY:

Brock, Emma, High In The Mountains, Wisconsin: E. M. Hale and Company, 1938.

Carlson, Natalie Savage. The Family Under The Bridge, New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958.

DeAngeli, Marguerite. Thee Hannah, New York: Doubleday Doran and Company, 1940.

DeAngeli, Marguerite. Yonie Wondernose, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1944.

Jewett, Sarah Orne. A White Heron, New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1963.

Justus, May. New Boy in School, New York: Hastings House Publishers, 1963.

Lampman, Evelyn Sibley. Navaho Sister, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1956.

Lattimore, Eleanor Frances. Little Bear, New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1931.

Lexao, Joan M. Maria, New York: The Dial Press, 1964.

True, Barbara and Henry, Marguerite. Their First Igloo, Chicago: Albert Whitman and Company, 1943.

Udry, Janice May. What Mary Jo Shared, Chicago: Albert Whitman and Company, 1966.

Walcher, Rosalind. The Magic Top, New York: Panda Prints, Inc., 1965.

VII. THE ANNOTATION

Mr. Poppers Penguins by Richard and Florence Atwater and illustrated by Robert Lawson is an appealing story for children. It is the story of a painter, who sends to the Antarctic for a penguin and then gets it a partner so it will not be lonely. The end result is a house full of penguins and a house full of problems.

The outward appearance of the copy used for this study is a gray color with the title and a picture of some penguins. The illustrations in the book are simple in detail and all done in black and white "penguin" colors. According to the library's records the book had been checked out forty-two times since 1964.

The Weightless Mother by Norman Bell was a new book in the library in 1967-68. It is the story of a present day family--mother, father, four children and a dog. The father is a scientist, and the mother consumes some experimental pills which she thinks are aspirin. They make her weightless and able to float about which leads to amusing adventures for the family.

The cover of the book is green with an illustration of the mother and the family dog floating over the town. It is an eye catching cover that tends to arouse curiosity. The illustrations inside are black and white and are done by W. T. Mars.

The book was checked out soon after its appearance on the library's shelves and had gone out three more times since.

The Wonderful Flight to the Mushroom Planet was new to the library last year. It was written by Eleanor Cameron and illustrated with simple black and white illustrations by Robert Henneberger. It is a story of Mr. Bass, the "scientist," and two young boys, David and Chuck, who go to the Mushroom Planet. The cover is yellow with an illustrated scene of the "people" in the book that arouses curiosity and interest about the book. It had been continually checked out this school year.

The Mouse and the Motorcycle is a very popular book with the children using the library. It is continually checked out and is inquired about often. There were two copies of the book in the library during the subject year. It is an appeal-

ing story by Beverly Cleary about a boy staying at a hotel who meets, quite unusually, a mouse named Ralph and his family. The boy lets Ralph ride his toy motorcycle, and adventures and problems occur.

The cover is tan with a picture of Ralph riding the motorcycle. The illustrations are black and white and are done by Louis Darling.

The Horse That Swam Away was written by Walter Farley. All of Farley's books are read by the children but this story of the horse Tena and her near drowning is one of their favorites. It had been checked out fourteen times since its arrival in the library last school year. The illustrations are by Leo Summers and are done in black, blue and white. The cover is a bright blue with a picture of Tena on it.

Back To School With Betsy was written by the popular writer, Carolyn Haywood. This particular copy had been checked out sixteen times and all of those times it was checked out by girls. The entire series of Betsy books are highly recommended reading. Typical adventures in the first grade are retold in "B" Is For Betsy, by Carolyn Haywood. This is the first of an extremely popular series including Betsy and Billy, Back To School With Betsy, and Betsy's Busy Summer. Although about a first grader, the Betsy books are longer than the usual picture book and look much more grown-up. By the end of first grade some of the girls will be reading Betsy books on their own.¹ This indicates then

¹Nancy Larrick, A Teacher's Guide To Children's Books

that the material is easy to read but the quality of the story makes it appealing for a variety of ages.

Stormy is one of the very popular animal books by Marguerite Henry. It had been checked out of the library forty-three times since 1964 and it was often asked for, when not found on the shelves.

The color and black and white illustrations are by Wesley Dennis and these beautiful pictures do much to increase the appeal of the book. The cover picture of Stormy makes the reader want to pick up the book and open it.

Snipp, Snapp, Snurr and The Red Shoes was written and illustrated by Maj Lindman and is one of a very popular series of books. It is a simple story of three boys who find extremely untidy ways to earn money in order to buy some red shoes.

Because of simple presentation and many colored pictures, the book appeals to children of different ages and reading abilities. This particular book had been checked out of the library seventeen times.

The Voyages of Doctor Dolittle by Hugh Lofting was also illustrated by him with numerous black and white illustrations. The copy used in this study was a rebound copy of the book and since 1967 the book had been checked out eleven times. Being rebound, the cover is a plain gray.

The story is of the doctor and his sometimes strange

animal friends and their travels and adventures.

Bed-knob and Broomstick was written by Mary Norton, who presents a story of three ordinary youngsters and a neighbor lady who has been practicing some magic. It had gone out of the library thirty-six times since 1964. The book is illustrated by Erik Blegvad with simple black and white pictures. The cover is a bright blue with an interesting illustration of an adventure contained in the story on it.

Black Beauty written by Anna Sewell is an ageless story of a horse and the many owners and adventures of the horse. Wesley Dennis has illustrated the copy used for this study and there are a mixture of colored and black and white pictures. The rebound copy used in this study has a plain gray cover. This copy had been checked out of the library eleven times in the past year.

Charlotte's Web by E. B. White is a rebound copy that was placed on the library shelf in 1967 and had been checked out seventeen times. There were two other copies of this book in the library also.

It is an appealing story of a little girl and her farm animal friends who take on real personalities. The illustrations are by Garth Williams and are very appealingly done in black and white. The rebound cover is gray with an illustration of several of the characters from the story. The cover itself interests prospective readers to investigate further and look inside.

High In The Mountains by Emma Brock takes place in Switzerland and is the story of a boy who with the help of his sister saves enough money from goat herding to go to carving school. The author also did the illustrations in blue, orange, black and white. Her pictures show the Swiss countryside and costumed people of the country. The cover is a bright blue with the children of the story illustrated on it. A new library card was placed in the book in 1964 and it has not been checked out by anyone since that time.

The Family Under The Bridge was written by Natalie Savage Carlson. It is the pathos of homeless families living under a Parisian bridge that underlies the telling of this unconventional and lighthearted tale of a hobo and a fatherless family.¹ It is illustrated by Garth Williams and has black and white illustrations. The book has a gray cover with an illustration of the family and hobo under the bridge. The illustration should create curiosity about the book.

It had not been checked out of the library since May, 1966, and prior to that time it had been checked out twelve times. Four of those times it was checked out by teachers.

Thee Hannah! written by Marguerite De Angeli is the story of a Quaker girl who has a difficult time accepting her plain life. She is fascinated by pretty clothes of others and only comes to learn the true meaning of her

¹Clark, Margaret M., Keeping Up With Children and Books Supplement (Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1959), p. 6.

religion when a Negro woman, whom she helps, points out to her the meaning of the Friends' plain bonnet. The illustrations are by the author and are both color and black and white.

The card in this book indicates that since 1964 the book had been checked out three times. Two of those times teachers checked it out and the only other time was on September 19, 1967 by a third grader.

Yonie Wondernose was also by Marguerite De Angeli and is the story of a Pennsylvania Dutch boy who assumes a man's responsibility when a fire threatens his family and their farm animals.

The illustrations are by the author and are done in black and white. The cover is a maroon color with a white outline drawing of Yonie on it.

The book had been checked out of the library three times since 1964 and two of those times a teacher checked it out.

The following comments were found relating to Marguerite De Angeli the author of the above two books. Arbuthnot stated Mrs. De Angeli was one of the pioneers in relating stories about the minority groups around her home in Philadelphia. Her stories are slight, but the warm pictures she paints, both with colors and words, of Amish, Quaker and Pennsylvania Dutch children are important. Henner's Lydia, Skippack School, Yonie Wondernose and Thee Hannah! contribute to youngsters' feeling that these people are even as you and

I, but perhaps a bit more interesting.

Yonie with his wondering is a favorite, especially when, like the hero of the folk tale, his wondering pays off and he proves his courage as well. Particularly appealing, too, is little Quaker Hannah, who despises her Quaker garb until she finds herself chosen, because of it, to serve a great cause. This book goes back in time to the Civil War.¹

A White Heron was written by Sarah Orne Jewett and takes place in Maine. It tells the story of a shy girl who meets a hunter of the heron. It is illustrated in black and white by Barbara Cooney. The cover is colorful and shows a scene in Maine.

The book had been checked out five times in three years and one of those times it was checked out by a teacher.

New Boy in School by May Justus is the story of a Negro boy coming into an all white class in a new school. It tells of his adjustment to the class and their acceptance of him. The pictures are by Joan Balfour Payne and are done in black and white. The cover is yellow and shows a Negro boy and a white boy on it. Seven teachers and five students checked out the book since 1965.

Navaho Sister was written by Evelyn Sibley Lampman and is the story of an Indian girl who, along with some other

¹May Hill Arbuthnot, Children and Books (Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1957), p. 419.

Indian children, is sent to Oregon to a school to be educated. It tells of her growth from reservation life to the end when she wishes to become a teacher. She learns to accept ways of life very different from her Indian childhood. The book contains a few black and white illustrations by Paul Lantz. The book had gone out of the library sixteen times since 1962. Five of those times teachers checked out the book.

Little Pear by Eleanor Frances Lattimore had been checked out of this school's library once. It is the story of a Chinese boy and his adventures along the way of growing up. It tells of experiences any boy might have with the setting in China. The book has numerous illustrations by the author. The cover of the book is red with a yellow outline drawing of the book's main character.

Arbuthnot, in reviewing this book, said there are excellent books about both China and Japan, written by people who have lived in those countries, who know and love the people and have a story to tell. For the sixes and sevens, Little Pear and Little Pear and His Friends are prime favorites.¹

Maria by Joan M. Lexau is the story of a Mexican girl who receives a doll that is too good and valuable to play with. Her family, who are poor, exchange the doll for a birthday cake and chicken cooked at a store like Maria had always wanted and a less fancy doll that she can play with

¹ Arbuthnot, op. cit., p. 454.

without concern. The illustrations are done in brown and blue by Ernest Cricklow and appear on each page of the story.

The story cover is appealing with a picture of Maria and her doll. The cover is a protective slick plastic cover. The book had been checked out from the library six times, with five of those times by teachers.

Their First Igloo was written by Barbara True and Marguerite Henry. It is an exciting story of an Eskimo boy and girl who build their own igloo in a storm and fear their dog is lost in the storm. It is an appealing story with a readily meaningful plot to children.

Two children had checked this book out of the library since 1963.

The book was illustrated by Gladys Rourke Blackwood with black and white and color illustrations. The cover has a colorful illustration of the two children and their dog.

What Mary Jo Shared was written by Janice May Udry. It is the story of a Negro girl and her problem of sharing something with her class that no one had thought of sharing before. It is colorfully illustrated by Eleanor Mill. The book's cover is brown with a dark brown outline of Mary Jo on it.

It had been checked out of the library by a fourth grade teacher.

The Magic Top was written and illustrated in color by Rosalind Welcher. It is the story of a Jewish boy, Avrum, who goes out to buy candles for Hanukkah and meets three

beggars to whom he gives his money. The cover is blue with a picture of Avrum on it. The cover is made of a colorful slick plastic material.

The book had been checked out two times, once by a student and once by a fourth grade teacher.

VIII. THE BOOK SURVEY

Twenty-four books were attractively laid out on a large table front side up. They were put in no order, and from time to time during the interviews, they were rearranged to eliminate a factor of some being placed in a more prominent place than others.

Each child was interviewed alone and was asked to look at the twenty-four books. He was encouraged to open the books and look through them. Then he was asked to choose any of the books he thought he would enjoy reading. If he had already read a book, it could still be chosen on the basis that he would be recommending it for someone else to read as a good book. From the books selected, the children indicated their first choice and then their other choices. The children chose then from two to eight books.

The books selected from those frequently checked out were as follows:

| | <u>Chosen</u> | <u>First Choice</u> |
|----------------------------|---------------|---------------------|
| Charlotte's Web | 32 | 8 |
| The Mouse & The Motorcycle | 25 | 5 |
| Bed-knob and Broomstick | 24 | 2 |

| | <u>Chosen</u> | <u>First Choice</u> |
|---------------------------|---------------|---------------------|
| Black Beauty | 24 | 2 |
| Stormy | 22 | 4 |
| The Horse That Swam Away | 18 | 8 |
| Mr. Popper's Penguins | 17 | 5 |
| The Weightless Mother | 10 | 3 |
| Wonderful Flight | 8 | 0 |
| Back To School With Betsy | 6 | 2 |
| Dr. Dolittle | 6 | 0 |
| Snipp, Snapp, Snurr | 4 | 1 |

From the books not frequently checked out, the selections were:

| | <u>Chosen</u> | <u>First Choice</u> |
|-----------------------------|---------------|---------------------|
| Their First Igloo | 7 | 0 |
| The Family Under The Bridge | 6 | 1 |
| New Boy In School | 4 | 2 |
| The Magic Top | 4 | 0 |
| Yonie Wondernose | 4 | 0 |
| High In The Mountains | 3 | 0 |
| Navaho Sister | 3 | 0 |
| What Mary Jo Shared | 3 | 0 |
| A White Heron | 3 | 0 |
| Little Pear | 1 | 1 |
| Thee Hannah | 1 | 0 |
| Maria | 1 | 0 |

It will be noted that the children selected with much greater incidence, books with previous high check-out rates.

Charlotte's Web was the most popular choice with The Mouse and The Motorcycle running second.

A point to note is that from the first seven choices, six of them are stories about animals. This coincides with the indication by the children, when interviewed, that animal stories were their most often chosen favorite.

Of books chosen more than once, Back To School With Betsy was the only one chosen only by girls. This is understandable, since the book is basically a story about and for girls.

The low choice of Snipp, Snapp, Snurr and The Red Shoes indicates that this was probably a poor selection by the investigator. A clue to the low choice could be the book's appearance as almost a picture book, whereas a fourth grader might wish more reading content. Also, the illustrations have an old-fashioned quality that seemed to cause the children to put the book down after looking through it.

It was observed by the investigator that a book's cover was often a factor in choice. The covers with illustrations were usually picked up first, and within the illustrated covers, the pictures of animals were favored.

The book The Family Under The Bridge has a Garth Williams illustration on its cover. The investigator observed this illustration appeared to be the only reason this book was chosen several times.

The illustrations within the books were also important to the incidence of choices. The illustrations in the style

of Garth Williams seemed to be the most acceptable. An example of this is the book The Magic Top which has this style illustrations of the main character, Avrum. This was observed to be the most important factor in this book's being chosen.

The slick plastic covers used on some of the books appeared to influence some of the choices. The book Maria was one of these, and the only time it was chosen, the feel of the cover apparently influenced the choice. Feeling of the slick covers on What Mary Jo Shared, New Boy in School and The Magic Top was also apparent.

Their First Igloo contained pictures of a dog that is important to the story, and it was noted that this book was sometimes chosen after opening the book and seeing the pictures of the dog. The pictures of the Eskimos did not seem to be very influential in choices. The animal illustrations in Yonie Wondernose were a factor in the book's choice, too.

There were, in the two groups of books, a proportionate number with cover illustrations, attractive looking and feeling covers and attractive illustrations inside. Although this was an important factor of choice in the "not frequently checked out group," the "frequently checked out group" were chosen for these and other reasons. Many of the children, as they made their selections, commented that they had heard of certain books from the frequently checked out group, or that one of their friends had read the book. None of the books from the not frequently checked out group was mentioned.

This showed a need to promote these books to motivate the children in this apparently unexplored area of literature.

IX. THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire used was designed to give an indication of the knowledge and awareness the subject children had concerning minority groups. The questionnaire is shown in Appendix A of this study.

The questions were designed to deal with those minority groups that were the subjects of the not frequently checked out books of this study. For instance, the question dealing with the Quakers was used to check understandings gained from any use made of the book Thee Hannah! The question dealing with the Mormons was used to check understandings gained from reading the book The Coming Of The Mormons.

The questionnaire was first given in February to check the children's knowledge and understandings of minority groups. The second testing done at the end of April was done to check for improvement in knowledge and understandings as a result of the motivational devices.

X. THE MOTIVATIONAL DEVICES

A period of motivation followed the interviewing and questionnaire administration the first time.

The twelve unpopular group books were arranged in an attractive library display. A bulletin board calling attention to these books was placed above the display. The bulletin

board was backed with red paper and white lettering and trim was used. The board was captioned with "What In The World Shall We Read?". Then arranged around this caption were book jackets and colored pictures, depicting the stories in the displayed books.

The bulletin board and display were located in a central part of the library so that everyone entering the library could notice it.

The teachers were encouraged to promote the minority group books to their classes. The librarian agreed to assist in promoting these books to the groups coming into the library daily.

The teachers were encouraged to bring into their classrooms materials that might be relevant to learning about minority groups. The social studies teacher was asked to use the opportunities easily presented in the study of various places in the world of Social Studies.

The book The Coming of the Mormons by Jim Kjelgaard and illustrated by Stephen J. Voorhies was read to one fourth grade class. This was intended to be an example to the class of a book dealing with a minority group.

The other group did not read the book and this group was then compared to the group that had read the book on their answers to question number six on the questionnaire which deals with the Mormons.

The book was selected because:

1. It dealt with a minority group little known and

- understood by these children. This was pointed out in the questionnaire when thirty-eight of the children missed question number six dealing with Mormons.
2. It was a book from a series of Landmark books, many of which deal with minority groups in a historical and interesting way. It was thought that hearing one of the series might promote interest in other books in the series.
 3. It was a book with excitement and interesting features as well as informative for fourth graders.

XI. RESULTS OF THE MOTIVATIONAL DEVICES

The results of the library display are shown as follows:

1. The librarian reported that most of the teachers coming to the library commented on the display.
2. The librarian reported that many of the children looked at the display and were drawn to look through the books. This they had not done when the books were on the shelves.
3. In relation to the numbers of people, more teachers checked out the books than students.
4. The following books from the group of twelve displayed were not checked out during the time:
 - a. Thee Hannah
 - b. The Magic Top
 - c. Navaho Sister
 - d. Maria

e. Their First Igloo

f. A White Heron

5. The following books from the group of twelve displayed were checked out as follows:

a. High In The Mountains - - Third Grade Teacher

b. Little Pear - - Fourth Grade Teacher

c. New Boy In School - - Third Grade Student

d. The Family Under The Bridge - - Fourth Grade Student

e. What Mary Jo Shared - - Kindergarten Teacher

f. Yonie Wondernose - - Kindergarten Teacher,
Kindergarten Student

The kindergarten teacher's use of two books points out an important factor. The building of background for understanding minority groups should start at the beginning of the child's education.

Reactions to the display indicated that with motivation, circulation of these books could be increased.

The fourth grade teacher read the book about Mormons to her class and agreed to stress understanding of the Mormons and their religion.

After completion of the book, the teacher involved said that it was difficult to present the story as interesting. She said many points had to be elaborated on and explained in order to hold the children's interest, and this made the reading long and involved.

After completion of the book, the children did agree

that it was a good story and that they enjoyed learning about these people. Several students commented that they would like to read other books in the series. This comment then shows that some growth in this area did take place.

XII. QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

Table 1 shows subject pupils improved test scores on seven questions dealing with minority groups, scored lower on five questions and the same on one.

The question dealing with Mormons shows a decided change from the first test to the second testing. There were fifteen more correct answers on the second testing. Of the group who had read the book The Coming Of The Mormons, twenty pupils missed the question on the first testing and only seven missed the item on the second testing. Of the group who had not read the book, eighteen missed the question on the first testing and eighteen missed it on the second testing.

The first three questions on the questionnaire dealt with Negroes, and it would appear, by the small number who missed the questions at each of the testing times, that the students were more aware of this minority group than of some of the others.

The question dealing with the Scandinavian people was the one more frequently missed, despite the fact that the Scandinavian countries were covered in the fourth-grade social studies program.

TABLE I

RESULTS OF QUESTIONNAIRE GIVEN FOURTH GRADE PUPILS AT THE ADEL
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CONCERNING MINORITY GROUPS WITH FIRST
TESTING FEBRUARY, 1968, AND SECOND
TESTING APRIL, 1968

| Factor Involved In Question | First Test Right Answer | Second Test Right Answer |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Towns where Negroes live | 50 | 51 |
| Negro characteristics | 53 | 54 |
| Negro homes | 53 | 52 |
| Mexican in Adel school | 53 | 53 |
| Definition of a Quaker | 35 | 38 |
| Where Mormons live | 16 | 31 |
| An Oriental homeland | 24 | 36 |
| Characteristic of Indian | 50 | 48 |
| Scandinavian homeland | 14 | 11 |
| Eskimo homeland | 38 | 47 |
| Jewish Hanukkah | 33 | 44 |
| Synagogue definition | 47 | 45 |
| Foreigner definition | 38 | 37 |

The overall pictures of the questionnaire indicates that the children did not gain appreciatively in knowledge about minority groups. The number of wrong answers on the second testing shows this to be true. The question dealing with the Mormons was the only question that showed decided improvement in right answers, and this is due to the emphasis on study of background for this question.

XIII. CAUSES

The investigator as a result of interviews and observation of the use of motivational devices believes these factors to be the causes of the low reading incidence of books about minority groups:

1. The books had not been properly displayed in the library. This was evidenced by the book display which raised check-out rate and interest.
2. As was indicated by the teacher interviews, the teachers were not using many of the books in the classrooms, and the students could not become familiar with this area of literature in classroom work.
3. The interviews showed that the children had no background or experiences with these minority groups and therefore would not necessarily understand or be interested in these books.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY

Books about minority groups were not chosen by the children of the Adel Elementary School, and it was the purpose of this study to look for causes and ways of motivating further exploration of this material.

Fourth grade children were interviewed as to personal experiences with minority groups, travel experiences, church experiences and family life. They were then asked to choose books they would enjoy reading from a group of twenty-four books. Twelve of the books were books with a high check-out rate in the school library and the other twelve were books concerning minority groups with very low check-out rates.

Motivating procedures for stimulating reading were a bulletin board and book display in the library, cooperation of the librarian and teachers in suggesting minority group books for reading and classroom work, and the reading of a book on a minority group to one of the fourth grade classes.

A thirteen point questionnaire on minority group knowledge was given at the beginning and end of the study.

I. FINDINGS

The causes of low reading incidence of books about minority groups were found by the investigator to be:

1. The library books were not properly displayed.
2. The teachers were not using the books in their classrooms.
3. The children had had practically no experiences with minority groups.

Questionnaire results revealed that the subject pupils on seven questions received a higher score, on five questions a lower score, and on one question the score stayed the same. The question referring to Mormons showed the biggest gain and this was probably due to the reading of the book about Mormons as a motivational device.

II. CONCLUSION

Improvement in understanding and reading interest concerning minority groups was slight. This was shown in the low score improvement on the questionnaire and the small amount of interest shown in the library display.

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APPENDIX A

Name _____

Directions: underline the best answer.

1. Negro families are living in
 - a. Des Moines
 - b. Adel
 - c. Waukee
2. A Negro is a person who
 - a. doesn't go to church
 - b. does strange things
 - c. has dark skin
3. Negro families usually live in
 - a. stores
 - b. barns
 - c. houses
4. Boys and girls from Mexico who might come to Adel to live should
 - a. go to work and not finish school
 - b. go to our public school
 - c. be ignored by us
5. A Quaker is a person who
 - a. eats oatmeal
 - b. belongs to the Friends church
 - c. belongs to a bird watching club
6. Most Mormons in the U.S. live in
 - a. Chicago
 - b. Missouri
 - c. Utah
7. An oriental can come from
 - a. France
 - b. Sweden
 - c. China
8. A Navaho Indian is usually
 - a. a dangerous citizen
 - b. a lazy citizen
 - c. a useful citizen
9. A Scand navian can be a person from
 - a. Scotland
 - b. Sweden
 - c. Spain

10. Eskimos would probably be found living in
- a. the Swiss Alps
 - b. northern Canada
 - c. northern Maine
11. The people of the Jewish religion
- a. celebrate Christmas as a religious holiday
 - b. celebrate Easter as a religious holiday
 - c. celebrate Hannukah as a religious holiday
12. A synagogue is
- a. a place of worship
 - b. a hospital
 - c. a kind of game
13. A foreigner is
- a. a person visiting or staying in a country other than his own
 - b. any person who lives in Germany
 - c. any person who never stays home